



As we work to create environments in which everyone is acknowledged, feels a sense of belonging, and is treated justly, we need to put in the work, personally and professionally.

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GROWTH & CHANGE

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TO STRIVE FOR EQUITY, WE NEED TO PUT IN THE WORK

As educators, we must always recognize the need to continue to develop ourselves in a multitude of ways, including becoming ever more culturally aware, equity focused, and justice seeking in our work. We live in a society and work in school cultures shaped by colonialism and rife with systemic and institutional racism that create inequities in and outside of our school buildings.

Regardless of our specific roles, we as educators need to stretch at our edges to be in conversation on these important topics. This is challenging on many fronts, but unlearning and learning new mindsets, practices, and skills is part of ensuring humanity in our work. As Felipe Fernández-Armesto said in *Humankind: A Brief History* (2004), “If we want to go on believing we are human and justify the special status we accord ourselves — if, indeed, we want to stay human through the changes we face — we had better not discard the myth (of our special status), but start trying to live up to it.” This means recognizing what we don’t know and learning as much as we can.

In his book *Nuance: Why Some Leaders Succeed While Others Fail* (2018), Michael Fullan says if we are “relentlessly committed to changing systems for the betterment of humanity,” we can do so, in part, through our own personal and professional development.

As we work to create environments in which everyone is acknowledged, feels a sense of belonging, and is treated justly, we need to put in the work, personally and professionally. Our ability to engage with the work of creating schools and a society of racial equity asks nothing less. In my work, I find the following questions to be helpful for encouraging personal reflection and doing essential internal work about racial equity:

- Do I know the many ways I see the world differently than others might and do see it?
- How do I seek more information about how others see the world differently than I do so I have a fuller picture?
- Am I comfortable communicating about challenging topics?
- Do I respectfully share my perspective with someone who says something emotionally insensitive or disrespectful about another person or a group of people?
- In moments of discomfort, can I continue to let in information? Can I make informed, nonreactive choices and keep myself centered?

The work we are tasked to do in our schools as we become more equity focused asks us to willingly move ourselves from isolation and separateness to a connection to and concern for *all* in our community. Our ability to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with all in our schools means that we engage in professional learning experiences that stretch us and that we reflect on the answers to these questions and so many others.

REFERENCES

Fernández-Armesto, F. (2004). *Humankind: A brief history*. Oxford University Press.

Fullan, M. (2018). *Nuance: Why some leaders succeed while others fail*. Corwin Press. ■

